DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 286 132 CG 020 216

AUTHOR de Miranda, John
TITLE San Mateo County's Server Information Program (S.I.P.): A Community-Based Alcohol Server Training Program.
PUB DATE Apr 86
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the National Council on Alcoholism (San Francisco, CA, April 18-21, 1986).
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Alcoholic Beverages; *Community Programs; Compliance (Legal); *Drinking; *Hospitality Occupations; Legal Responsibility; *Prevention; *Program Development; Training Methods

ABSTRACT

The field of alcohol server awareness and training has grown dramatically in the past several years and the idea of training servers to reduce alcohol problems has become a central fixture in the current alcohol policy debate. The San Mateo County, California Server Information Program (SIP) is a community-based prevention strategy designed to decrease alcohol problems, especially the problem of drinking and driving. The program began with a free awareness training offered to all on-sale alcohol beverage licensees in the county in 1984. Recruitment procedures were implemented the following year and operators who agreed to be trained were offered a 6-hour training module which focused on legal and administrative concerns, alcohol problem statistics, alcohol physiology, motivation to drink, assertiveness training, signs of intoxication, pacing food and drink, prevention policy and management backup, and cutting off service. The SIP also provides funds to local police jurisdictions to mount decoy operations. Program evaluation is currently underway . Collaborative efforts such as the SIP provide an important tool to reduce the societal level of alcohol problems. (NB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

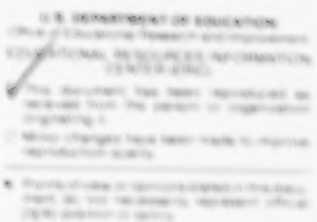
ED286132

San Mateo County's Server Information Program (S.I.P.): A Community-Based Alcohol Server Training Program

John de Miranda, Ed. M.*

Presented at the 1986 National Alcoholism Forum,
National Council on Alcoholism, San Francisco, CA

CG 020216



"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
John de Miranda
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

*Alcohol Program Consultant, Project S.M.A.S.H., San Mateo County Alcohol & Drug Program, 225 West 37th Avenue, San Mateo, CA 94403 (415) 573-3703

San Mateo County's Server Information Program (S.I.P.): A Community-Based Alcohol Server Training Program

John de Miranda, Ed. M.
Alcohol Program Consultant

SUMMARY: A description of the background, development, and implementation of the San Mateo County Server Information Program (S.I.P.) to train alcoholic beverage servers. S.I.P. is a community-based prevention strategy designed to decrease alcohol problems, especially drinking and driving.

Background

The field of alcohol server awareness and training has grown dramatically in the past several years. A concept that was once considered unusual and even bizarre, the idea of training servers to reduce alcohol problems, has become a central fixture in the current alcohol policy debate. The rapid expansion of this innovative prevention strategy is reflected in the development of S.I.P. a community-based program developed by the San Mateo County Alcohol and Drug Program, a division of the county health department. The program is supported largely with funds from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) through the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS).

It is interesting to note (and illustrative of the phenomenal speed with which server training has emerged as a public health concept) how the S.I.P. effort was initiated. What began as a seed of an idea quickly grew into a major alcohol prevention program unlike any effort previously witnessed in this country.

In mid 1983, while developing a comprehensive anti-drinking driver project grant application county staff decided to include the following minor objective as a project goal.

"Provide 10 prevention oriented educational programs to service clubs, restaurants/bar owners and other appropriate organizations each year."

The Comprehensive DUI System Improvement Project (also known as Project S.M.A.S.H. - San Mateans Advocating Sober Highways) consisted of a wide variety of enforcement, education, and coordination components costing almost $300,000 over two years. During this early developmental period, working with the local restaurant/bar/hospitality industry was considered a subordinate almost inconsequential element of this particular DUI counter-measure project.

In the space of less than three years, largely due to the support and encouragement of an NHTSA and OTS staff, as well as the receptivity of local beverage licensees, server training has become a major component of the overall project. Currently, S.I.P. contracts with a training firm charged with the responsibility of "marketing" the concept of responsible beverage service, and providing the actual on-site server training program.

In addition to the "carrot" of free server training programs and the attendant positive publicity, the program also employs the "stick" of increased alcohol-beverage-control enforcement, including youth decoy programs for both off-sale and on-sale establishments.

The Server Information Program is probably the first and certainly the largest and most comprehensive community-based effort to fully engage the hospitality industry in preventing alcohol problems. S.I.P. is also the first major effort of a local governmental public health alcohol agency to create an alcohol problems prevention strategy focused on the serving practices of alcohol outlets.

Development

The real beginning of S.I.P. was in June 1984, when a 4-hour free "awareness" training was offered to all on-sale alcohol beverage licensees in the county. The training, co-sponsored with several restaurant associations, focused on alcohol server liability (dram shop) issues, and methods to avoid overservice to patrons. The workshop leaders were Jim Peters (Intermission Ltd. - Massachusetts) and James Mosher, J.D. (Prevention Research Center - Berkeley), both nationally recognized experts in the areas of server training and legal liability. Perhaps not surprisingly, the majority of workshop participants were drawn from the alcohol problems and traffic safety fields, who were curious to hear about this emerging strategy. The contingent of servers

present, albeit small, was curious, enthusiastic, and indicated a willingness to be involved in helping to curb what was then being termed the national drunk driving epidemic.

An early attempt was made to utilize existing beverage industry server awareness programs to provide inexpensive training. All programs investigated, some with national recognition and support of major manufacturers, were rejected as being inadequate to the public health and prevention objectives of the project. These programs were seen as creative efforts to rehabilitate the public image of the beverage production industry, but fell far short of seriously restructuring the drinking policies and practices of commercial establishments.

During the summer of 1985 a recruitment occurred to select the individual or training firm responsible for actual curriculum delivery to participating beverage outlets. This effort was hampered by the dearth of candidates with the appropriate mix of experience in the hospitality industry. Conversely, few restaurant/bar personnel have an adequate understanding of responsible beverage service prevention techniques. Finally a training outfit was selected that had provided server training at military base demonstration sites. Several restaurant and bar operators, identified during the initial awareness presentation, were instrumental in participating on the selection committee, and providing input during the selection process.

Implementation

A major obstacle to program implementation centered around gaining the full credibility and cooperation of local hospitality operators. During early preimplementation discussions operators were suspicious of county government's interest in their business. Some had prior negative experiences with regulatory bodies (such as the California Department of Alcohol Beverage Control and local police departments), and feared that involvement in S.I.P. might somehow jeopardize their licenses. Others were skeptical and feared that county officials were part of the so-called neoprohibitionism movement. Therefore, it became extremely important for S.I.P. staff to proceed cautiously with operators while clearly pointing out the limited objectives of the program, as well as the extensive benefits to be gained by participation.

Operators were also justifiably ambivalent about implementing responsible serving practices that might affect their profitability. They complained that their late night business had already been seriously diminished by local police sobriety checkpoints (also initiated and funded by Project S.M.A.S.H.), and were dubious about a program designed to show them how to sell less alcohol, and which emphasized better service and increased food sales. In general, many older operators were resistant to the new concepts, while younger managers and owners appreciated the innovation and potential benefits.

Another early issue involved conceptually separating two distinct communities-of-interest in the alcohol beverage industry. The concerns of businesses whose profits are solely driven by sales of alcoholic beverages are fundamentally different from retail operators whose profits are driven by a wide variety of product sales and services. The former consists of alcohol producers (brewers, distillers, vintners) and to a lesser extent wholesale distributors. While the latter may be termed the retail hospitality industry made up of restaurants, bars, bowling alleys, caterers, concessionaries, hotels, clubs and inns. The latter is also more firmly imbedded in the fabric of the community, and as such is generally more responsive to community needs.

The first effort aimed at identifying operators receptive to training involved a mailing to 800 on-sale businesses urging them to join S.I.P. In order to become a "charter member" the licensee agreed to:

1. "Never knowingly serve alcohol to a minor"
2. "Never knowingly serve alcohol to an intoxicated person"

In addition to the above pledges which are already required as a condition of licensing, S.I.P. membership also required an additional commitment on the part of licensee. This third pledge paved the way for this unusual partnership between public health concerns and private business interests.

3. "Train staff in alcohol service practices which reduce the risk of alcohol-related accidents".

The benefits of program involvement included participation in free training events, an "official" certificate that could be prominently displayed identifying the operator as a responsible, concerned member of the community. The mailing included a convenient return postcard. One hundred cards were returned and an additional 40 licensees have joined in subsequent months.

During the 1985-86 holiday season a large newspaper add was placed, paid for by an alcohol-free beer manufacturer that saluted the charter S.I.P. members and listed them by name. On New Year's Eve a press reception was organized that included a low- and non-alcohol drink contest with recipes submitted by S.I.P. members. To insure widespread attention this competition was judged by local reporters and media personalities.

When the S.I.P. certificate is mailed to the operator, it is accompanied by another postcard to return if the licensee would like additional assistance. The options presented are:

A. Receiving low and non-alcoholic beverage recipes (a recipe guide has been developed from the recipe contest)

B. Receiving information on free staff training responsible service practices and policies

C. Attending meetings with other businesses to share information and discuss topics of mutual concern

D. Calling for additional information or to ask questions

Those operators who agree to be trained are offered a six-hour training module, often spread over 2 days at the convenience of the staff. The curriculum includes:

A. Legal and Administrative Concerns
    1. Criminal Liability
    2. Civil Liability
    3. Alcohol Beverage Control Administrative Licensing Considerations
B. Alcohol Problem Statistics - the nature and extent of the problem
C. Alcohol Physiology
D. The Motivation to Drink in America - creation and maintenance of modern alcohol myths, alcohol advertising
E. Practicing Assertive Behavior Techniques
F. Signs of Intoxication (inhibitions, judgement, reactions, coordination)
G. Pacing Drinks, Food, and Non-alcoholic Beverages
H. Prevention Policies and Management Back up
I. Cutting Off Service

In addition servers are trained in a system to pace and control the actual service of alcohol designed to substantially reduce the probability of intoxication. The recipe guide with creative non and low-alcohol drinks is also distributed.

In addition to the many trainings at restaurants, hotels, and bars, specialized training events utilizing the same basic curriculum have been developed for bowling alleys, fraternal organizations, country clubs, off-sale outlets, and Spanish speaking establishments.

Finally, the Server Information Program also provides funds to local police jurisdictions to mount decoy operations. These efforts are aimed at decreasing the sale of alcohol to minors and operate as follows:

- Advance warning letters are sent to all licensees about the upcoming decoy detail
- Underage police cadets or Explorer Scouts are utilized. These youth are observed attempting to purchase alcohol with ineligible identification. If a sale is made, police officers move in and cite the establishment. The licensee is then referred to the Server Information Coordinator and is offered an opportunity to have staff training. This is in addition to the sanctions imposed by the Department of Alcohol Beverage Control.

Initial results of the decoy operation were surprising. The non-compliance rate (i.e., operators who sell to minors) was 33.6% out of a total of 113 targeted licensees. The "real world" non-compliance rate is probably significantly higher since, 1.) all licensees were warned by letter of the upcoming decoy detail, 2.) the decoy was a youth who looked younger than his 18 years, and 3.) the decoy used his real I.D. and if asked gave his real age.

Conclusion

It is a difficult and complex task to determine the real effects of a community-wide server training program such as S.I.P. Efforts are currently underway to rigorously evaluate the influence of server training both at the Prevention Research Center (Berkeley, California) and the National Public Service Research Institute (Alexandria, VA). The results of these studies are eagerly awaited, and will certainly affect the future direction of S.I.P.

The San Mateo County Server Information Program operates with the following assumptions: 1) cultural drinking norms can be altered, and that an effective solution to the drinking driver problem must vigorously engage the hospitality industry, 2) reducing alcohol problems requires radically altering commercial alcohol promotions and service practices, 3) ultimately such programs must be acceptable to the licensees and seriously take into account their interests and concerns.

Given the current reassessment of alcohol's role in society, cooperation between the alcohol problems field and the retail hospitality industry can be successful. To this end it is important that a mutually respectful, non-threatening, problem-solving approach is adopted. Collaborative efforts such as S.I.P. provide an important tool to reduce the societal level of alcohol problems.

References

de Miranda, John. "The Role of the Alcohol Problems Field in the Responsible Beverage Service Movement," paper presented at the 1985 National Alcoholism Forum, National Council on Alcoholism, Washington, D.C.

de Miranda, John. "Perspectives on Server Training: Public Relations or Prevention." Alcohol, Health and Research World, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, Summer 1986 (forthcoming).

U.S. Department of Transportation, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Determinants of Youth Attitudes and Skills Towards which Drinking/Driving Prevention Programs Should Be Directed Volume II: An In-depth Review of Twelve Youth DWI Prevention Programs. Project SMASH, pp 8-16. DOT HS 806 904, Interim Report, November 1985.

JDM:mcv 01493605